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Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development

Statement submitted by World Society for the Protection of Animals, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2006/100.

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Statement

Importance of animal welfare to sustainable development and the reduction of poverty and hunger

Animal welfare can reduce poverty and hunger, and attain sustainable development; but endangering animals can harm people and the economy. Livestock production, the world's largest land user, is a source of nutrition and income. Animals are also beasts of burden and like in India, and Native America underpin cultures. UN and national disaster systems, early warning and evacuation programs need to protect both people and animals.

Over a billion and half people live below or near the poverty line; many who need animals. In the Horn of Africa's pastures, millions of animals important to the region's nutrition and economic future are dying, so too in southern Somalia and the Kenyan coast. If they die off, what economic opportunities are left? What of the culture? This is also an issue in the West. Katrina and Rita killed over ten thousand cattle, endangering the economic standing of modest income families.

Animal welfare is thus part of sustainable national security. If the poor lose their livelihood, they lose hope and are susceptible to dangerous political influences. At a minimum, they move to cities, depopulate rural lands and stretch national resources. WSPA calls on the UN, when considering peace, security or economic development, to remember the poor who depend on animals.

UN member states also should recognize that a way to alleviate food insecurity is humane and sustainable agriculture, often small – scale animal farming, which can stabilize individual families. This means industrial animal agriculture is problematic certainly in the developing world, where two-thirds of the world's livestock live, and with crops often part of a self-sustaining system. Large scale, industrial animal agricultural farming methods out-compete and expel small, humane farms. While small-scale family farming can deliver affordable food directly to the poor, factory farming can take it away; the poor can't afford the products, the best of which is often shipped to overseas.

The World Bank has concluded that in the livestock sector "there is a significant danger that the poor are being crowded out, the environment eroded and global food security and safety compromised." WSPA agrees. Merging farms, feed suppliers, and meat packers under one tent reduces quality and competition, forcing out small, independent farmers. Further, developing countries using factory farm methods need import-dependent grains, tractors, fuel, fertilizers. Special animal units and processors are required for industrial livestock business, none of which a developing country starts out making itself.

WSPA proposes that the UN craft disaster management and development policies that inculcate a balanced approach to sustainable farming, animal welfare and small farmers. We also recommend participation in a new working group formed by UNESCO and WSPA of experts from governments, NGOs and UN agencies to develop common humane animal welfare approaches that protect human livelihoods.